

NSC BRIEFING X

6 May 1959

DOCUMENT ID
AUTH: HM 73-2
DATE 12-18-77 REVIEWER: 372044
JORDAN

I. King Husayn returned to Jordan from his world tour on 2 May to find a major political crisis arising from serious factional dispute in army. Dispute has already resulted in resignation of Premier Rifai, and new cabinet is being formed by Hazza Majalli.

A. Maneuvering by a powerful clique of Bedouin army officers to discredit rival "northern" officer group and oust chief of staff Major General Sadiq Shara, also engaged prestige of Premier Rifai, who had supported Shara.

B.

C. Selection of Majalli would appear to commit King more closely than ever to militant Bedouin minority whose domination of army has ensured the monarchy's survival.

1. Majalli (43), former British protege who served briefly as premier during unsuccessful attempt in December 1955 to take Jordan into Baghdad Pact, is distantly related to prominent Bedouin officers of Majalli family in Bani Sakhr tribe, [REDACTED] and army chief of staff Shara.

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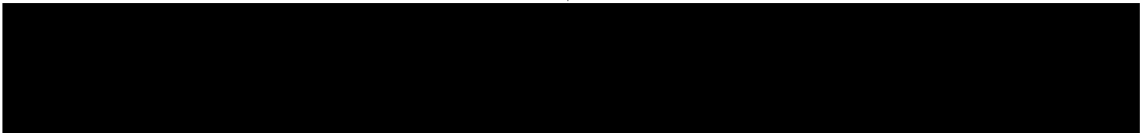
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2. Majalli in past has maintained relations with many nationalist groups in Jordan, and prospects for return to overtly normal relations with UAR thus seem somewhat improved.
3. However, Cairo press viewed the change merely as substitution of "agent of British policy" for an "agent of American policy."

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4.



- a. Preliminary reports indicate new cabinet contains usual combination of old-line politicians with a couple of younger, relatively able men (Nashashibi and Wasfi Mirza).

D. Change may lead to resumption instability in government and army which was chronic before Rifai took over government leadership two years ago.

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